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SUBJECT: BAN DISAPPOINTED ASEAN BLOCKS GAMBARI

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) At his monthly lunch with the PermReps of the Security Council, SYG Ban expressed his strong disappointment in the decision to cancel the presentation by his Special Adviser on Burma, Ibrahim Gambari, to the East Asian and ASEAN Summits. Prompted by Amb Khalilzad, Ban also reported Special Rapporteur Pinheiro's conclusion that the regime seeks to return to the status quo ante. Ban urged continued vigilance and pressure from the international community, including by the Security Council. Separately Amb Khalilzad spoke by phone with Gambari, who reported he has engaged in bilateral discussions with all members of ASEAN. Gambari said the Chinese are sending mixed signals. Gambari said he intends to visit the "weak links" in ASEAN -- Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam -- and expects to return to New York by the first week of December. He has no date set yet for his return to Burma.

Ban Expresses Disappointment

¶2. (C) At USUN's request, SYG Ban put the issue of Burma on the agenda for his November 20 luncheon with Council PermReps. He told the Ambassadors that he had dispatched Gambari to Singapore to participate in the East Asian and ASEAN Summits in response to an invitation by Singapore. Thus he was strongly disappointed in the decision to prevent Gambari from briefing the Summits. His envoy would only be able to consult on the sidelines of the meetings.

¶3. (C) Amb Khalilzad urged Ban to convey his disappointment at the treatment of his envoy to all relevant parties. He queried the role of China in this decision, asking where is Chinese influence, noting the Chinese has previously argued that the subject of Burma was more appropriately handled in the region. Amb Khalilzad also asked Ban to provide a read-out on Pinheiro's trip to Burma.

Pinheiro's Negative Report Argues for Vigilance

¶4. (C) While making clear that Pinheiro had not yet finalized his report, Ban said Pinheiro had concluded that the regime wants to return to the status quo ante. Pinheiro explained that the regime had responded to his requests for meetings and allowed him to travel within the country, but that a government minder had been present at all times. He met with five prisoners, including monks. He reported the regime is still holding 93 persons labeled as "terrorists," and his interlocutors had admitted that 15 people were killed during the crackdown on demonstrators. Pinheiro believes that some detainees are still undergoing "harsh interrogation." On the positive side, Pinheiro was impressed

by Minister Aung Kyi, the government-appointed liaison to Aung Sang Sui Kyi, reporting that the liaison is prepared to pursue substantive discussions on reconciliation. But overall the regime is not prepared to respond to the concerns of the international community as outlined in the October 11 Security Council Presidential Statement, the October 2 HRC resolution, and ASEAN statements.

¶ 15. (C) Ban said the situation requires continued vigilance, and urged the international community to sustain pressure, including the Security Council. In addressing this issue, Chinese PermRep Wang asserted that the government in Myanmar is pursuing a constructive approach, and committed Chinese support for the Secretary-General's efforts.

Latest on Gambari's Plans

¶ 16. (C) Separately, Amb Khalilzad spoke with Gambari by phone November 20. Gambari said he had accomplished his objectives through bilateral meetings with all members of ASEAN. When asked about the Chinese role, Gambari opined the Chinese are sending mixed signals. On the one hand, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi had reportedly pressed the Burmese to accelerate the reconciliation process during his recent visit to Burma. But in Singapore, the Chinese apparently caved to Burmese pressure to block Gambari's briefing, scuttling a compromise that had been in the works.

¶ 17. (C) Gambari said he will proceed from Singapore to visit the "weak links" in ASEAN: Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. He said he expects to return to New York during the first week in December, at which point he wants to operationalize the Core Group with SYG Ban. Gambari said he has no date set yet

USUN NEW Y 00001054 002 OF 002

for his return to Burma. But he reported he expects to have his staff in place in Rangoon in December.
Khalilzad